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All About Birds (<https://www.allaboutbirds.org/>)

Rufous Hummingbird Life History

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Habitat (habitat)

Rufous Hummingbirds typically breed in open or shrubby areas, forest openings, yards, and parks, and sometimes in forests, thickets, swamps, and meadows from sea level to about 6,000 feet. During their migration, look for Rufous Hummingbirds in mountain meadows up to 12,600 feet elevation. In Mexico, wintering Rufous Hummingbirds live in oak, pine, and juniper woods at 7,500 to 10,000 feet elevation, shrubby areas, and thorn forests.

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Food (food)

Rufous Hummingbirds feed primarily on nectar from colorful, tubular flowers including columbine, scarlet gilia, penstemon, Indian paintbrush, mints, lilies, fireweeds, larkspurs, currants, and heaths. Rufous Hummingbirds get protein and fat from eating insects, particularly gnats, midges, and flies taken from the air, and aphids taken from plants.

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Nesting (nesting)

NEST PLACEMENT

Females begin nesting within 3 days of arrival on their breeding grounds. They put their nests up to about 30 feet high in coniferous or deciduous trees such as Sitka spruce, western red cedar, Douglas-fir, pines, hemlock, birch, maples, thimbleberry, and occasionally ferns or vines. Nests are hidden in drooping branches, sometimes with several nests (up to 20) in the space of just a few yards.

NEST DESCRIPTION

The female builds the nest alone using soft plant down held together with spider web. She decorates (or camouflages) the outside with lichen, moss, and bark. Finished nests are about 2 inches across on the outside, with an inner cup width of about an inch. Nests may be reused the following year, not necessarily by the same individual.

NESTING FACTS

Clutch Size:	2-3 eggs
Number of Broods:	1 brood
Egg Length:	0.5 in (1.3 cm)
Egg Width:	0.3 in (0.8 cm)
Incubation Period:	15-17 days
Nestling Period:	15-19 days
Egg Description:	Tiny, white (about a half-inch long).
Condition at Hatching:	Naked apart from sparse gray down along the back, eyes closed, clumsy.

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Behavior (behavior)

Rufous Hummingbirds hover at flowers to sip nectar or fly from one to another in fast, straight lines.

When not feeding they perch nearby, then launch themselves after any other hummingbirds that appear. All ages and both sexes are aggressive, even during brief 1-2 week stopovers in the course of migration, at which times they may chase off resident Broad-tailed, Broad-billed, Violet-crowned, and Black-chinned hummingbirds. Males may chase off females from feeders even during the breeding season. You may see Rufous Hummingbirds picking insects out of the air, out of spider webs, or from leaves or bark. When agitated, they fan their tails and chip, and males flash their iridescent throat patches. Males

perform a steep oval or J-shaped courtship flight when a female enters their breeding territory. If the female perches, the male may switch to low, horizontal figure-8s.

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Conservation (conservation)



Rufous Hummingbird populations declined across their range by almost 2% per year between 1966 and 2014, resulting in a cumulative decline of 62%, according to the North American Breeding Bird Survey. Partners in Flight estimates a global breeding population of 11 million with 100% spending some part of the year in Mexico, 52% in the U.S., and 48% breeding in Canada. The species rates a 13 out of 20 on the Continental Concern Score. Rufous Hummingbird is a U.S.-Canada Stewardship species and is on the [2014 State of the Birds Watch List](http://www.stateofthebirds.org/2014/?hstc=75100365.cd915188826d40f5948784b36215700f.1558132597016.1558132597016) (<http://www.stateofthebirds.org/2014/?hstc=75100365.cd915188826d40f5948784b36215700f.1558132597016.1558132597016>) which lists bird species that are at risk of becoming threatened or endangered without conservation action.

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Backyard Tips (backyardTips)

Rufous Hummingbirds may take up residence (at least temporarily) in your garden if you grow hummingbird flowers or put out feeders. But beware! They may make life difficult for any other hummingbird species that visit your yard. If you live on their migration route, visiting Rufous Hummingbirds are likely to move on after just a week or two.

This species often comes to [hummingbird feeders](http://www.allaboutbirds.org//Page.aspx?pid=1181) (<http://www.allaboutbirds.org//Page.aspx?pid=1181>). Make sugar water mixtures with about one-quarter cup of sugar per cup of water. Food coloring is unnecessary; table sugar is the best choice. Change the water before it grows cloudy or discolored and remember that during hot weather, sugar water ferments rapidly to produce toxic alcohol. Find out more about what this bird likes to eat and what feeder is best by using the Project FeederWatch [Common Feeder Birds bird list](http://feederwatch.org/learn/common-feeder-birds/?hstc=75100365.cd915188826d40f5948784b36215700f.1558132597016.1558132597016) (<http://feederwatch.org/learn/common-feeder-birds/?hstc=75100365.cd915188826d40f5948784b36215700f.1558132597016.1558132597016>)

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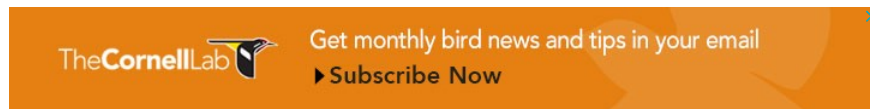
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Species in This Family

[Hummingbirds \(/guide/browse/taxonomy/Trochilidae\)](/guide/browse/taxonomy/Trochilidae) (Order: Caprimulgiformes,

A horizontal strip of four photographs of hummingbirds. From left to right: 1. A hummingbird with a purple head, green body, and yellow tail perched on a thin branch. 2. A hummingbird with a blue head and grey body perched on a branch. 3. A hummingbird with a purple head and grey body perched on a branch. 4. A close-up of a hummingbird's head and neck, showing a red throat patch and grey body.

[Browse Species in This Family \(/guide/browse/taxonomy/Trochilidae\)](/guide/browse/taxonomy/Trochilidae)

FEATURES OF A GOOD BIRDHOUSE

1. IT'S WELL CONSTRUCTED
2. IT'S IN A GOOD LOCATION
3. IT'S THE RIGHT SIZE
4. IT'S THE RIGHT COLOR
5. IT'S THE RIGHT SHAPE
6. IT'S THE RIGHT MATERIAL
7. IT'S THE RIGHT PLACE
8. IT'S THE RIGHT TIME
9. IT'S THE RIGHT WAY
10. IT'S THE RIGHT PLACE
11. IT'S THE RIGHT TIME
12. IT'S THE RIGHT WAY

Right Bird, Right House: C

BIRD SONG HERO

Hard Binds Soften North Region

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song-hero/bird-song-hero-tutorial)

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Seed Types

(<https://www.allaboutbirds.org/article/choosing-bird-seeds/>)

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Bird Feeder

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(<https://www.allaboutbirds.org/how-to-learn-bird-songs-and-calls/>)

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